

## MASAI CUSTOMS

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ʔ-menefiga, nedufgökien-nanai  
ae-arna, ʔjo epolpol.

gentleness would not be called en-  
nanai in that kraal, as it is the name  
of a corpse, but it would be called by  
another name, such as epolpol (it is  
smooth).

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Ore ten eikilikwan ol-  
tuŋgani ʔ-omon lo-ʔ-oiboni  
kitok, nemeipot Ol-ʔnana, nʔjo  
Ol-ʔpolpol.

And if anybody of that kraal were  
to ask for news of the great medicine-  
man Ol-onana<sup>1</sup>, he would call him  
Ol-opolpol.

Ore ol-paiyan kitok ʔata  
ʔ-gers ten ʔʔ, nemenuki  
eng-arna enye amu eimany  
in-gera enyena.

If an elder dies leaving children,  
his name is not buried, for his de-  
scendants are named after him.

Ten ʔʔ ol-paiyan kitok  
araki e-ŋigorŋyŋai kitok,  
nemeishirakini, nemeituraari  
ninye anaa kulikae-tuŋganak  
oŋti.

When old men or women die, they  
are not wept for, nor are they thrown  
away like others who die young.

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Eborakini ʔ-n-amugha  
ŋeŋjuko, nŋyefgi ol-kerr,  
neahŋluni e-ilata, neeliki o-  
sesen pŋkin.

New sandals are made, a sheep is  
slaughtered, the fat is roasted, and  
the body anointed.

Nedumuni ʔiya, nepiki en-  
netii ol-oip sidai, nŋyefgi  
ol-kiteŋg te-inne, neinosi  
ʔ-n-giri pŋkin. Neifŋgware ʔ-oik  
pe etum il-ŋgojŋinia ʔiŋguai pe  
epwŋnu aadumaa ol-meneŋgani  
ʔinos.

After this the corpse is carried  
to a shady place, where a bullock is  
slaughtered, and all the meat is  
eaten on the spot. The bones of the  
bullock are left with the body so that  
the hyenas may smell it, and come  
and carry it away, and devour it.

Ten ʔʔ ʔ-oibonok loo-ʔ-  
Maasae araki ʔ-karsisi,  
meituraari, kake ʔyefgi en-  
giteŋg araki en-gerr, neitauni  
e-ilata, neeli lido-ʔtua. Ore  
pʔeidipi, nepiki atwa ol-chŋni,  
neʔyai e-wŋji netii ol-oip,  
neturuni en-giti-kumoto nijo  
em-boŋt, nepiki, nennukari  
tooʔsolto. Nŋji inne-wŋji

On the death of a Masai medicine-  
man or rich person the corpse is not  
thrown away. An ox or a sheep is  
slaughtered, and the fat is taken and  
rubbed on the body, after which it is  
put in an ox-hide and carried to  
a shady spot. A small hole is then  
dug resembling a trench, into which  
the body is laid and covered with  
stones. This is called a grave.

<sup>1</sup> Commonly called by Europeans Lenana.

## B. BERNARDI - THE AGE-SYSTEM OF THE MASAI

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|          |             |               |                   |
|----------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|
| KISONGO. | 1. Kisongo  | 2. Sigirari   | 5. Salei or Saleh |
|          | a. Kiteto   | 3. Laitokitok | 6. Laitayok       |
|          | b. Moiba    | 4. Siria      |                   |
| LUMBWA.  | 1. Nguruman | 2. Serenget   | 3. Engaruka       |

The villages, *eng ang*, pl. *ing angite*, is the minimal territorial unit. Villages are distributed within the minor sections. JOHNSTON,<sup>18</sup> had already noted that "they generally range within certain districts". A village is the residence of one or more elders with his or their wives and cattle. A man after his marriage does not live in the same village as his father, unless the latter has become senile and unable to cater for himself.

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The internal structure of the village is based on the gatesystem. This consists in a proper arrangement of the house on the sides of the village's gates. The village consists of a large yard enclosed by a thorny fence with gates opening at opposite sides. The house are built on the right and left sides of each gate, every gate with its houses belonging to a single elder. The usual arrangement is as follows: the first house on the gate's right is the dwelling of the owner's first wife; the first house on the left side is that of his second wife; the second house on the right side is that of his third wife; and the same alternating order is followed if marries more wives. The central yard is reserved for cattle. The elder's cattle are allotted to each of his wives according to her rank in the house. Cattle in possession of one side of the gate cannot be inherited by the other side. When inheritance takes place it is with great care that one tries to avoid cattle interchange.<sup>19</sup> The gate system, observes FOSBROOKE,<sup>17</sup> is an ideal, and "a symmetrically arranged gate is seldom found in practice". When people move in search of better grassland, the village is not destroyed, but simply evacuated. During the owner's absence the houses may be occupied by other temporary tenants. At the reverse migration the owner comes back to his old village if this is not irreparably decayed, and it is agreed by custom that any foreigner who might have found shelter in the house must vacate the place to the original owner.

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Another type of Masai village should be mentioned here. It is

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<sup>18</sup> JOHNSTON, *The Uganda Protectorate*, London 1904, p. 810.

<sup>19</sup> See especially MERKER, l. c., pp. 27 s.

<sup>17</sup> FOSBROOKE, l. c.; p. 44.

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and the candidates have previously agreed on the person to be appointed, and the matter is also discussed with the prophet (*laibon*). As in previous cases, these transactions are kept secret because the office is not popular, and the selected man and his family would avoid the election. Only a popular man and a "pure Masai" distinguished for his physical strength, may be appointed *aunoni*. Generally the *aigwenan* is not elected, but in some cases he may be. "

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According to MERKER, p. 72, on the day of his official appointment, the selected man is seized and forced to sit on a stool in the centre of the *singira*. He is then clothed with elders' garments and decorations. FOSBROOKE, " states that soon after his appointment he will be given a wife and cattle by his age-mates.

The unpopularity of the office seems to derive from the fact that the elected man must settle down and behave as an old man as to the peculiar nature of the office. This is described by FOSBROOKE, " and his description sums up the descriptions and statements of all other authorities. " "The duties of the position (of the *aunoni*) are obscure, but as far as is known the *launon* appears to be a sort of scapegoat for the age (unit). If he flourishes and begets many children, and if his cattle prosper and increase, it is a bad omen for the rest of the age (unit). But his adversity will indicate the age (unit)'s prosperity. He must do everything in advance of his age-mates, marry, settle down, make the final payment that binds the marriage. It is as though the *launon* standing on the brink of elderhood, send forth the *launon* as an explorer into the unknown country, so that any bad luck which may be awaiting them shall be focussed on one individual and not on the whole age (unit). But the *launon* is held in great respect by his age-mates, and any demands that he makes must be fulfilled. It is stated that he is the only official whose order must be obeyed. In discussing this with an elder, I pointed out that this should give the office

" MS. 48, p. 4.

" FOSBROOKE, I. c., p. 39.

" FOSBROOKE, I. c., pp. 39 a.

" While on p. 29 FOSBROOKE states: *Uneto* " is performed by sections or groups of sections. The Kissongo traditionally perform the ceremony at Mugulat near Musa, I. c., on the eastern slopes of Mondul Mountain, actually in the Arusha district. As many as possible of the age attend, but by no means all". On p. 36 he writes that "all sections and areas meet together for the *uneto* ceremony". Evidently this statement must be qualified by what he says above.

## THE MASAI

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In the first descending generation, the word *en-kerai*, "child," may be applied to son, daughter, brother's son and daughter, and father's brother's son's son and daughter, or they may be distinguished as masc. *ol-ayioni*, "boy," and fem. *en-tilo*, "girl." Father's brother's daughter's son is *ol-aputani*, and father's brother's daughter's daughter *en-e-sotua*, the latter term applying also to father's sister's daughter's daughter, and mother's sister's son's daughter. The term *o-le-sotua* is applied to the mother's brother's daughter's son, mother's sister's son's son, mother's sister's daughter's son, and father's sister's daughter's son. *O-le-nh-apu* is applied to the sons of father's sister's son and mother's brother's son, and *en-e-nh-apu* to their daughters. In this generation there are no terms for mother's brother's daughter's daughter, and mother's sister's daughter's daughter. 601

In the second descending generation, *ol-akui* includes the sons of a man's own son and daughter, brother's son, father's brother's son's son, father's brother's son's daughter; while *enk-akui* is applied to their daughters. Father's brother's daughter's son's son is *ol-aputani*, and the daughter is *en-e-sotua*. The term *o-le-nh-apu* covers son's son, and the sons of sister's son, father's sister's son's son, and mother's brother's son's son; their daughters are *en-e-nh-apu*. *O-le-sotua* includes the sons of sister's daughter, father's brother's daughter's daughter, father's sister's daughter's son, father's sister's son's daughter, mother's brother's son's daughter, mother's brother's daughter's son, mother's sister's son's son, mother's sister's son's daughter, and mother's sister's daughter's son; *en-e-nh-apu* is applied to the daughters. There are no terms for mother's brother's daughter's daughter's son and daughter, or for mother's sister's daughter's daughter's son and daughter.

Among affines, the term *ol-aputani* is applied to wife's father, wife's father's brother, and wife's brother, but their wives are *enk-aputani*, *en-e-sotua*, and *en-e-sotua* respectively. Son and grandson of wife's brother are also *ol-aputani*. Wife's sister is *e-sindani e-ayit*, and all children and grandchildren of wife's brother and sister (except wife's brother's son and grandson) are *e-sotua*. The majority of affinal terms are in fact of the *-e-sotua* category. Husband is *ol-moruo* or *ol-payian*, wife *e-goroyioni* or *en-kilok*; junior wife is *enk-aini*.

These kinship terms, however, are not very much used, for it is the custom of the Masai to call each other by cattle-names: members of a domestic group give each other cattle on various occasions, and thereafter the word denoting the kind of animal given is used as the equivalent of a reciprocal relative term; the animal name is prefixed by *pa*, meaning "giver or receiver of." Thus, a father usually gives his son a bull when he is about 10 years old, and they then call each other *pa-oigoni*, "giver (receiver) of a bull" instead of *papa* and *li-ayioni*. An elder brother will give a younger brother a heifer, and they will then be *pa-n-lauuo* (heifer) to each other. Paternal cousins often call each other *pa-meregesh* (ram). 551

Among these relatives, the mother's brother has great power and influence over his sister's son. He can give him orders, which must be obeyed, and he may take what he wants from his nephew, who has also the right to take what he wants from his uncle. Refusal to obey the mother's brother can be punished by cursing, but this is not reciprocal. Behaviour patterns are based on seniority and the claims of kinship, and are expressed in the avoidance of bad language and unseemly actions, and the observance of formality between certain persons. There is avoidance between a man and his wife's mother, and between a man and his full brother's wife, though not between him and his half-brother's wife. The formality of greetings helps to preserve the respect for elderhood. 604 602 606 607 888

## Pre-marital Sex-life

A man's sex-life begins when he has been circumcised; a girl's when she reaches puberty. Pre-marital relations are more formalized than among the Nandi, since the unmarried warriors of a local company, *sirit*, live in a barrack, *e-manyata*, with their mothers, some of their sisters, and their girl lovers, *e-sanca*, each man having his own lover. The rules which regulate marriage apply in the selection of a lover. 836

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concerned. One who is expelled from the family because of bad behavior is, as a rule, taken in again upon payment of a head of cattle or a goat. Moreover he hands over the animal to a man friendly to his lineage. The latter takes it to the father of the one expelled and requests reacceptance for him. If it is refused, the one expelled seeks and finds acceptance in the same manner as the detached one. Detachment and expulsion occur only in very

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Merker phot.

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rare cases and have no influence on the right of succession. The rights of the head over the individual members of the family lapse legally upon their marriage, but not yet practically, since, conditioned by attachment and respect for the elder, lasting concessions are made to him in questionable matters.